

Tai Chi & Qi Gong's Health Benefits

The health benefits of Tai Chi practise have been studied for hundreds of years (and in the case of Qi Gong, over 2000 years) in China. In recent years, western science has also begun to discover that these exercises offer more medical benefits than any other exercise system.

One of the greatest dangers to our health is stress. 'Stress' is the fight or flight response that is generated whenever we encounter a physical or psychological challenge. The adrenal glands then produce adrenalin and the blood pressure increases, the breathing rate increases, muscles become tense and oxygen consumption increases.

Suffering stress over an extended period the adrenal glands will also begin to flood the system with an hormone called cortisol, an oversupply of which is linked with the breakdown of the immune system and an increase in the chance of and severity of auto-immune dysfunction. Studies have shown there may be a link between long term stress and the incidence of cancer.

Tai Chi & Qi Gong practice have been proven to gain immediate results with the following:

- High blood pressure
- Reduction of anxiety, depression and overall mood imbalance
- Relaxation of muscles
- Regulation of breathing and increased breathing capacity

Longer term benefits:

- Stabilization of blood pressure. Tai Chi & Qi Gong practise cause the heart rate to balance through relaxation and deep, regular breathing allowing the blood vessels to relax, creating less resistance to blood flow and hence a reduction in pressure.
- Slowing down of the aging process through improved cellular regeneration
- Overall mood balance through mental training and relaxation
- Improved sleep
- Reduction of asthma and allergic reactions
- Enhancement of the body's ability to recover from illness and injury
- Improved balance and co-ordination (studies shown benefits to be twice those of any other exercise)
- Improved full range mobility
- Improved posture and muscle tone
- Dramatic improvement in the ability to deal with stressful situations
- Strengthened immune system – studies have shown regular Tai Chi & Qi Gong practise increases the production of T-Cells. T-Lymphocytes aid in the destruction of harmful bacteria and tumour cells.
- Increased D.H.E.A production. D.H.E.A is dehydroepiandrosterone, a hormone, low levels of which are directly linked to cancer, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, allergies, heart disease and most auto-immune diseases.
- The American Journal Of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation tested rheumatoid arthritis patients with Tai Chi & found it to be safe and beneficial to building bone mass and strengthening connective tissue as Tai Chi is the safest weight bearing exercise

- Tai Chi & Qi Gong practise increase the volume of blood flowing through to the brain, extremities and small capillaries. The deep relaxation causes blood vessels to gently dilate enabling them to carry more blood.
- Reduction in the amount and severity of headaches due to the increased blood and oxygen, thereby also improving memory and preventing senility.
- Improved digestion. Deeper, abdominal breathing massages the digestive organs. The muscles involved in peristalsis (the pushing of food through the digestive system) are stimulated and balanced. Therefore, people with weak systems are strengthened and excessively strong contractions are reduced.
- Tai Chi & Qi Gong also improve appetite with a greater production of saliva both during and after practise. Hydrochloric acid production increases which further improves digestion (this function decreases with age).
- A 1992 study of 226 workers conducted by the Sino-Japanese QiGong Institute found that 30 minutes of Qi Gong prior to their work day reported improvements in 'increased joy in life, reduced selfishness, increased enthusiasm and willpower and overall wellbeing'. The study showed that regular Tai Chi & Qi Gong practise dramatically improved mental health which western medicine also agrees directly impacts physical health.
- Improved energy levels. Tai Chi & Qi Gong increase vitality because they conserve energy by lowering the metabolic rate. With a relaxed body and quiet mind, the heart beats more slowly and regularly. High levels of stress creates a tendency to breathe rapidly and shallowly.

Tai Chi & Qi Gong practise are recommended by acupuncturists and doctors as back up treatment that patients can continue at home to assist current treatment and also to prevent physical and mental illness and prolong life. The key to obtaining the benefits for your own health are regular, preferably daily practise and an open and patient attitude.

Master Sam Li, - Principal of The Australian College Of Tai Chi & Qi Gong is an acupuncturist with both eastern and western medical training. His instructors are graded by the Chinese Wushu Association of Beijing, the Australian Kungfu Wushu Federation and the National Coaching Council. The College offers public classes, workshops, weekend retreats, and workplace training in both Wu style Tai Chi and all levels of sports, medical and spiritual Qi Gong.

For further details or to organize a free demonstration and information session, please contact Sam Li or his assistant Rachel Addison (www.taichicollege.com.au).

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